

## Words That Can Help

- I'm sorry your mom/brother/friend died.
- What do you miss the most?
- What is the hardest time of the day for you?
- I care about you.
- I am sorry for your pain.
- How can I help?
- I have no idea what it must be like for you; I've never had a (spouse/child/parent) die. Can you tell me what it's like?
- I'm here if you need to cry.
- I've never experienced this before, and I just don't know what to say to you.
- Would you like to talk about it?
- Is there anything in the classroom you would like to change to feel more comfortable?

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- I really miss (name of deceased). He (or she) was a special person. I miss (offer specific memories or a short story). Tell me what it's like for you.
- I'm thinking about you especially today because I'm aware that today is your mother's birthday (anniversary of the death, your birthday, etc). Is there something that I can do to make this easier for you?
- What was your sister/friend/dad like?
- I'm here to listen if you want to talk, or just spend time together if you don't want to talk.
- Can you tell me about the death?
- You may feel nothing at all right now, or you may feel upset and feel like crying—whatever you feel is okay, and you can talk to me about anything.
- Even though I feel sad, I am going to be okay and I am here to take care of you.
- You are angry because dad/friend/brother is not here to play with you. It's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to let out your anger by punching your sister/the wall/your friend. You can let out your anger by pounding on your mattress.
- It is very sad that grandma died, but nothing you said or did caused her to die.

- Tomorrow is your birthday and you may have some mixed up feelings. You may feel happy and excited, but you may also feel sad or angry because mom/dad/grandpa isn't here to celebrate this special day. Whatever you are feeling is normal and okay.
- I like to hear stories and your memories about your mom/friend. What is your favorite holiday memory?
- What will you remember the most about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Did you learn anything from your grandmother that you would like to share?

### Words To Avoid

- I know just how you feel.
- You'll get over it.
- Don't think about it.
- Don't cry. Remember, you still have your \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's your fault.
- I know just how you feel....my dog died last year.
- If only you had (or hadn't)\_\_\_\_\_.
- Tears won't bring her back
- Forget about it.
- Be strong. Be brave. Buck Up! Chin up!
- You are the man/woman of the house now.
- You should feel.....(proud, relieved, happy, sad, etc.)
- It will be okay.
- You must be strong.
- It was the will of God.
- At least (name of deceased) is no longer suffering.
- You'll find someone else to share life with/be with/play with.
- Move on—get on with your life.
- There must have been a reason.
- Why are you so upset that your brother/that person/your sister died? You didn't even like him.
- You shouldn't get angry. It's wrong to feel jealous.
- (Name of deceased) is better off where he/she is now.
- Big boys don't cry.
- You should be over it by now.
- Your father/brother was a good person. God loved your father/brother so much He took him to heaven.
- Be strong for your mother/sisters/friends.

## How to Help One Who Is Grieving

The most important thing you can do for anyone who is grieving is  
**LISTEN** and not judge!

It's helpful to:

- Honor their feelings rather than trying to talk them out of the feelings. Never tell them they shouldn't feel the way they do.
- Do not give advice.
- Let them choose whether or not to express their feelings. Be comfortable with the intensity when they do.
- Do not use clichés. Try "I can't imagine what this is like for you."
- Be honest.
- Be patient with them. Each grieving person works through it in their own unique way, in their own time.
- Don't take the griever's behavior personally. They may be feeling overwhelmed and not aware of what is going on for other people around them.
- Talk about the person who died in a natural way. Don't avoid the topic but don't go on and on about it either. It helps to share memories, even if your friend cries or is sad. They appreciate that someone will talk to them about the person who died.
- Offer to do a specific job. Don't wait for them to ask.
- Send a card or write a note.
- Remember that it will be difficult for your friend throughout the year--Christmas, birthdays, Thanksgiving, the anniversary of the death, family holidays. Acknowledge the day in some quiet way.
- Accept that your friend's life will never be the same again. Your friend will be changed by this experience. Don't say, "That's not like you."
- Grief is not something you "get over," but something you learn to live with. There will always be an empty place in the heart of the survivor.

## **Comforting Activities**

1. **Accept your sorrow.** Do not try to be brave. Take time to cry. Crying is not a sign of lack of strength. It is a natural expression of sorrow.
2. **Talk about it.** Find a friend, family member, teacher, pastor, or counselor to talk to. Find someone who has experienced a similar loss. Talk often.
3. **Eat well.** Your body needs good nourishment during this time of emotional and physical loss. A vitamin supplement might be helpful.
4. **Accept your understanding of the death.** You have probably asked "why" over and over and have gotten no satisfying answer to your question. Some questions have no satisfying answers.
5. **Write about your feelings.** Keep a journal or write poetry, essays or letters. Recording your thoughts may help you get your feelings out. Your journal or writings may also serve as a record your progress. Grief is a journey.
6. **Exercise regularly.** Depression can be lessened by body changes brought by exercise. Exercise will also help you sleep better. Return to your old exercise program or start a new program as soon as possible.
7. **Give of yourself.** Find a way to help others. Helping to ease someone else's pain will probably lessen your own.
8. **Don't let your sorrow cripple you.** There may be feelings of anger, guilt and sorrow but there comes a time when it is important to get back to your normal routine.
9. **Find your source of strength.** Set aside time to find peace of mind. If you value religion, stay active in your church. Scripture has much to say about sorrow.
10. **Keep busy.** Do purposeful activities that occupy your mind. Avoid frantic activities.
11. **Music can be very comforting.** Find songs about courage, strength and faith.
12. **Scripture verses or quotes.** Find a quote, poem, or scripture verse that is significant to you and memorize it.
13. **Accept offers of help.**
14. **Get help.** A trained counselor may be needed to help you move forward in the process of your grief.